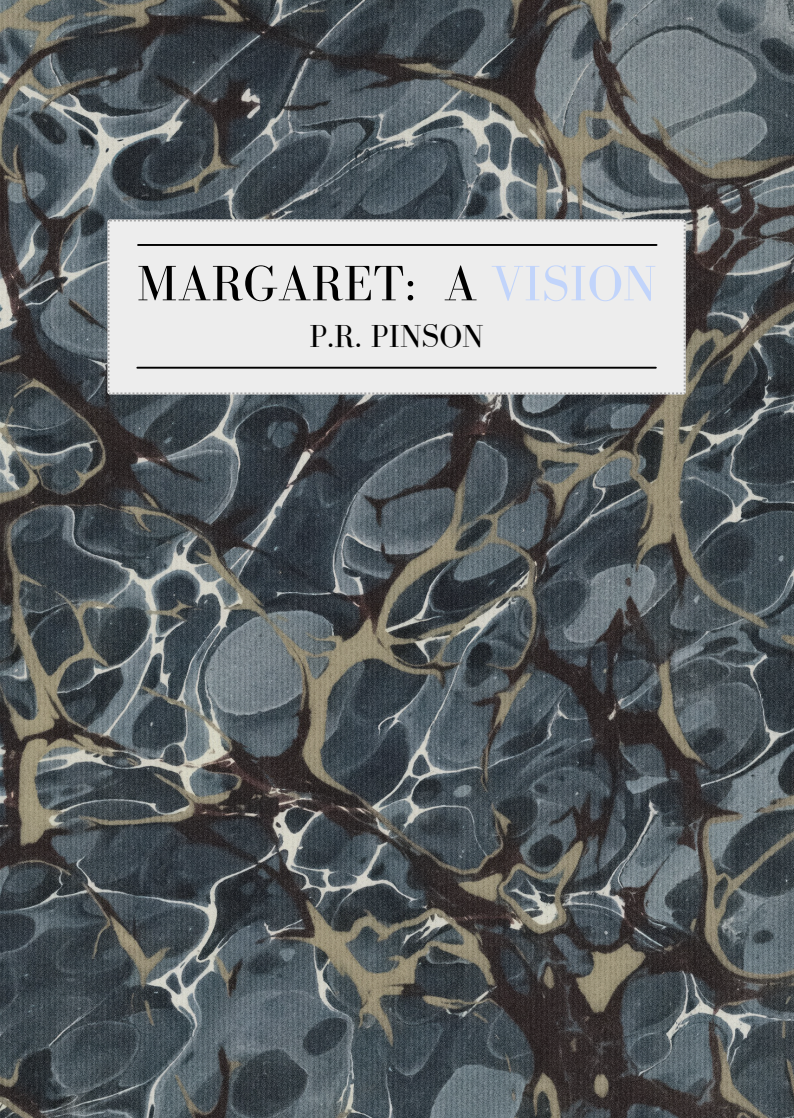

MARGARET: A VISION

P.R. PINSON

MARGARET: A *VISION*

by

P.R. PINSON

Two gates the silent house of Sleep adorn;
Of polish'd ivory this, that of transparent horn:
True visions thro' transparent horn arise;
Thro' polish'd ivory pass deluding lies.

Dryden's Aeneid

From the *Pearl Manuscript*, British Library
(MS Cotton Nero A X/2)

For J.P.

I

Come the ides of August, where Margaret lay,
A wild hand soweth gromwell ‘mid the thorn;
Each wind beareth spice—in gallant array—
Or Afric balms which might her crown adorn:
This wonderment did ease my heart forlorn,
Whene’er I’d lay me on that summer grave
And drowse on summers past—through eve,
through morn—
And on what graces her three summers gave,
‘Till Sorrow would come calling, as master to slave.

II

Dreams oft found me there I shall never tell—
(Portents, whispers, visitations of light—)
For such might be the conjury of Hell;
For devils may come clothed in beauties bright
To dim with vain visions our inborn sight.
Heed ye then what the holy fathers say,
In reticence thy soul is kept upright.
And yet—one dream I shan't so cast away
For I would more fear the judgement on Judgement Day.

III

That dream came dropping from the noontide sun,
Anon my senses enfolded in flame;
Methought at last those harrowed days were done,
And with them the sorrow and body lame,
Yet what it was by fire I then became
I know not—but for wit, all was abyss.
To none that Adam hath imparted name—
(Nor that his angel)—can I liken this:
The terror was beyond all terror—the bliss, bliss.

IV

And so[1] arrested I endured what seemed
An age—yea, of an end I did despair—
'Till sudden light across that chasm teemed
And made of Nullity a middle air:
I found me standing in a garden fair,
Quickened as though a lazar from the pit;
And as such a one, thus freed of all care,
Would thence like Solomon in temples sit,
So gazed I on blossoms, as if the Holy Writ:

[1] I.e. *thus*; in the manner just described

V

The paeony, the daffodil, the rose,
The lily trembling in her lily bed;
And the branches above like Cupid bows
Poised in a gamble for *Selene*'s head[2],
Ever to drop petals of crimson red,
Which fell to earth yet nowhere fell to rot—
Aye, deathless is a garden of the dead,
Ne held mortmain, nor a burial plot:
As the first garden, made good—by a ghost begot.

[2] *Endymion*'s lover – the Moon

VI

I wandered then the way those blossoms led:
Eastward they tilted towards morning light;
And eastward the brooks through the bow'rs fed
Riverways arambling in threefold flight
To a silvern city beyond the night,
Wherein sat the Dawn as upon a throne—
Rising but to bless, as the bishop might,
Then back retiring to a court unknown,
Yet even so hidden, did pierce the very stone.

VII

Thither I went—to seek the morningtide—
But the way was lost in a wildered place
Where thistle and thorn ruled the riverside
And made me to stumble to my disgrace;
Unreadied then to meet the maiden face—
Phantom across the water—tending me:
A damozel she seemed, in vestal lace,
Processioning as in an obsequy . . .
And in her eyes I saw my love's—O Lord, 'twas she:

VIII

Margaret, the child, in full blossom of years,
Ladied as none but a dreamer may see,
With eyes like holy wells, freshened by tears,
And comeliness a moonwhite fleur-de-lis.
"Margaret," quoth I, "how may I reach thee?
A river doth divide us where I would."
To which the River—as upon decree—
Began to rage before the place I stood,
And gone was the damozel to the darksome wood.

IX

A dreamer who then knew himself to dream,
I, so emboldened, sought a wilful way—
(To leap for my lady—and cross the stream,
From thence to seek her—or, finding her, stay—)
But found me waking to the August day
Wherethrough I'd slept—and *lo*, despite a rain,
Which did the shepherds and their flocks dismay
And desolate the seedling summer grain . . .
'Twas a goodly penance
for a wandering swain.

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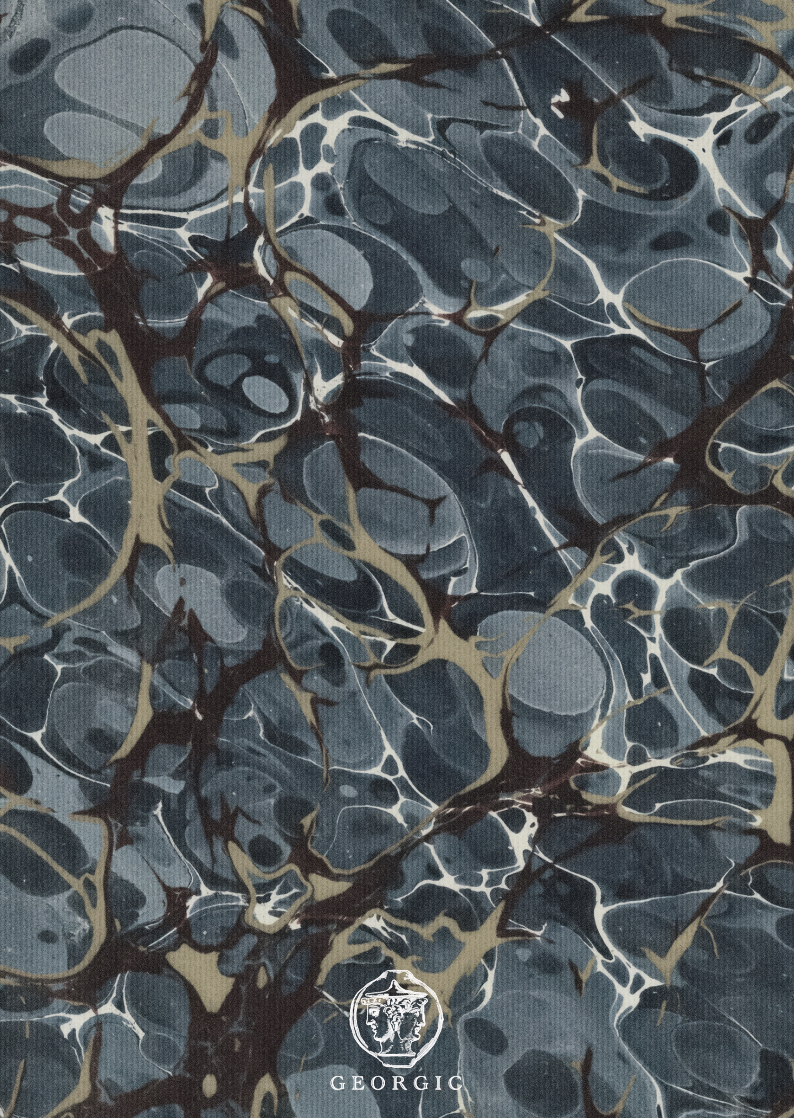
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